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IMD PREDICTS ABOVE-NORMAL RAINFALL IN 2ND HALF OF MONSOON

The southwest monsoon season (August to September) will bring rainfall in excess of 106% of the long period average, which is 422 mm

A WETTER SEPTEMBER IN THE OFFING

Most parts of the country, except the Northeast and adjoining areas of eastern India, are expected to record normal rainfall in August, said IMD Director General Mrutyunjay Mohapatra during an online press conference. Rainfall in September is likely to be above normal, he said. India received above-normal rainfall during June and July, with flash floods in some parts

SUB-NORMAL RAIN IN NORTHEAST A CONCERN

- The country received 474.3 mm of rainfall against a normal of 445.8 mm from June 1 to July 31, a surplus of six per cent, IMD said | **P9**
- In Northeast India, this is the fifth consecutive year of below-normal rainfall. Over the last 30 years, a declining trend in rainfall activity has been observed in the northeastern states, which is a cause of concern

42%

OF INDIA'S POPULATION IS DEPENDENT ON THE MONSOON FOR THEIR WATER

CHENNAI ▪ MADURAI ▪ VIJAYAWADA ▪ BENGALURU ▪ KOCHI ▪ HYDERABAD ▪ VISAKHAPATNAM ▪ COIMBATORE ▪ KOZHIKODE ▪ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM ▪ BELAGAVI ▪ BHUBANESWAR ▪ SHIVAMOGGA ▪ MANGALURU ▪ TIRUPATI ▪ TIRUCHY ▪ TIRUNELVELI ▪ SAMBALPUR ▪ HUBBALLI ▪ DHARMAPURI ▪ KOTTAYAM ▪ KANNUR ▪ VILLUPURAM ▪ KOLLAM ▪ TADEPALLIGUDEM ▪ NAGAPATTINAM ▪ THRISSUR ▪ KALABURAGI

● DON TERMS INDIA'S ECONOMY 'DEAD' ● WILL TAKE ALL STEPS TO PROMOTE NATIONAL INTEREST, SAYS GOYAL

India grins and bears the dead economy barb

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

EVEN as US President Donald Trump doubled down his attack on India calling it a 'dead economy', Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal told Parliament on Thursday that India would take all necessary steps to safeguard and promote national interest.

Goyal's assertion came a day after Trump announced 25% tariffs on Indian goods plus an additional penalty for doing business with Russia, with effect from August 1.

In a suo motu statement in both the Houses of Parliament, Goyal said the government is examining the implications of the US move and is engaged with all stakeholders, including exporters and industry, for taking feedback of their assessment of the situation.

"The government attaches utmost importance to protecting and promoting the welfare of farmers, workers, entrepreneurs, exporters, MSMEs and all sections of industry. We will take all necessary steps to secure and advance our national interest," he said.

The minister also said that in just over a decade, India has emerged the fastest growing major economy in the world and it is expected to become the third largest in a few years.

Though Opposition members demanded the government's response on Trump's remarks, Goyal's statement did not find any mention of it. The Opposition MPs were referring to Trump's attack on India and Russia for their bonhomie.

"I don't care what India does with Russia. They can take their dead economies down together, for all I care. We have done very little business with India, their tariffs are too high, among the highest in the world," Trump said.

In response to Trump's take, Goyal said international institutions see India as a bright spot. "India is contributing to 16% of global growth. Our exports have steadily increased.

In an increasingly protectionist world, India has done mutually beneficial trade pacts with UAE, UK, Australia and EFTA countries. We are committed to similar agreements with others," he said.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said there was no discussion on the real issues such as failure to reach a trade deal with the US, the imposition of a 25% tariff on Indian exports, and additional punitive actions for trading with Russia and Iran. "The minister wasted time in self-praise. It is quite clear that India now faces new and bigger challenges with the US. The much-touted personal friendship that PM Modi relied on has proved to be completely hollow" Ramesh said.

TARIFF TRACKER

POKE-MAN

I don't care what India does with Russia. They can take their dead economies down together, for all I care
Donald Trump

'RUSSIAN OIL TRADE A POINT OF IRRITATION'

India's purchase of Russian oil is "a point of irritation" in New Delhi's relationship with Washington, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Thursday, adding that it is helping Moscow's war efforts in Ukraine

TRUMP IS RIGHT, SAYS RAHUL

Endorsing Trump's criticism of the Indian economy, Cong leader Rahul Gandhi said everybody except PM Modi knows India's economy is 'dead'. "Yes, he is right... I am glad that President Trump has stated a fact," he said | **P9**

GDP GROWTH COULD TAKE 20-30 BPS HIT, SAY ANALYSTS

BENN KOCHUVEEDAN @ Mumbai

IF the 25% tariff on Indian goods announced by US President Donald Trump is implemented from August 1, it could pull down India's economic growth by 20-30 basis points (bps) in the current fiscal, say experts, adding that the effective rate could come down as the trade talks are still on.

"We do not see the tariff threat impacting GDP growth meaningfully... at worst, the impact is 30 bps. We expect final tariffs to settle in lower than 25%, as trade talks are on," said British brokerage Barclays.

Elara Securities also expects a 30 bps drag on India's GDP growth if there is no deal with the US. It added that the weakening rupee will be the first line of defence and thus the probability of a 50 bps rate cut in August has risen, which could cushion the economy against external shocks. But as of now, the tariff is negative on the rupee, which is speculated to reach the 88.5-89 level against the dollar.

According to Japanese brokerage Nomura Securities, the net impact of US tariff on India would be lower. "Taking into account sectoral exemptions, we estimate the effective tariff rate at 20% and this will be a 20 bps downside risk to the growth forecast for this fiscal," Nomura economists Sonal Varma and Aurodeep Nandi said.

Nomura has forecast India's FY26 GDP growth at 6.2% with a downside risk of 20 bps. "Exports to the US account for just 2.2% of the GDP, and include pharma, smartphones, gems & jewellery, industrial machinery, auto components, textiles and iron & steel; most of which will likely face margin pressure," it said.

Aditi Raman, associate economist at Moody's Analytics, said the US is India's largest trade partner accounting for 18% of total exports. However, India's economy is more domestically oriented than most of the region and relies far less on trade, she noted.

In 2024, Indian exports to the US amounted to $81 billion. Pharma, gems and textiles are the most vulnerable sectors to the US tariff heat.

Experts dismiss Don deal on Pak's oil reserves

BALA CHAUHAN @ Bengaluru

AFTER imposing 25% tariff on India, US President Donald Trump sought to rub it in, saying he had struck a deal with Pakistan to develop its 'massive' oil reserves. "Who knows, maybe they'll be selling Oil to India some day!" he quipped.

But strategic experts tracking Pakistan were not impressed. "It doesn't impress anyone for there are no proven offshore or onshore oil reserves in Pakistan," said Sharat Sabharwal, former Indian Foreign Service officer and former diplomat to Pakistan.

Trump's reference to the oil deal with Pakistan seems to be part of his effort to ratchet up pressure on India to get his trade deal, he said.

The purported oil deal remains "unclear", said Swathi Kalyani, geospatial researcher at Bengaluru-based think tank, The Takshashila Institution.

"While there are claims about surveys done regarding offshore oil reserves in India, there is no publicly available data currently to validate the same for Pakistan... If we compare the proven oil reserves, India's global position is 23rd, much ahead of Pakistan's 52," Kalyani said.

Kalyani added that most of Pakistan's operational oil fields are in its north but a significant number of gas fields are along the Indus, in the Balochistan region. Kalyani said oil mining will have wider consequences for the region and the dependent population. "With American investments coming in, Pakistan may end up facing collateral damage," she added.

"The well known oil reserve of Pakistan in the Indus basin is the Sari field (World Oil Map) discovered in 1966. It is spread across Sindh majorly, and remains in Balochistan. A 2017 report by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) regarding undiscovered oil reserves in the Lower Indus Basin, too, did not say anything about offshore reserves," she added.

INDIA'S OIL RESERVES MUCH AHEAD OF PAK

India's recoverable oil reserves in 2023 were 4.9 billion barrels (US EIA). In 2024, the estimated crude oil reserves in India stood at 671.40 million tonnes. On the other hand, the known energy potential of Pakistan according to a 2023 report of the Ministry of Energy, Government of Pakistan, is just 1,228.955 million (1.2 billion) US barrels

17 YEARS LATER

Court acquits all 7 accused in Malegaon blast

SUDHIR SURYAWANSHI @ Mumbai

SEVENTEEN years after the 2008 Malegaon bomb blast that killed six persons, a special National Investigation Agency (NIA) court on Thursday acquitted all seven accused, including BJP leader and former Lok Sabha MP Pragya Singh Thakur and Lt Colonel Prasad Purohit.

Pronouncing the verdict, judge A K Lahoti stated, "Terror has no religion because no religion can advocate violence.... So, the judgment cannot be based on moral and public perceptions."

Significantly, NIA special public prosecutor Rohini Salian had in 2015 resigned claiming that the agency was going out of its way to water down the case and had been given standing instructions to go easy on the 'Hindu terror' accused.

Judge Lahoti faulted the prosecution for failing to prove that the bike used in the blast belonged to Pragya Singh Thakur. "She became a sadhvi at least two years before the blast... no cogent material against her or any other accused," the judge said.

The court also noted that since no fingerprints or DNA samples were collected on time from the spot, the subsequent forensic report could not be relied upon as the evidence was contaminated.

"There can be strong suspicion but mere suspicion is not enough to punish them. The high degree of suspicion is established but not enough to convict them," the court said, adding it has given the accused the benefit of doubt.

Lahoti also found no evidence to establish that Abhinav Bharat, an outfit founded by Pragya Thakur and Col Purohit, used its funds for terror activities.

The Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) initially investigated the case and arrested 12 people, including Pragya and Purohit under various sections of the Indian Penal Code, Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) and Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA). The case went to the NIA in 2011. While MCOCA was lifted against the accused after the NIA took over, Lahoti said two sanction orders for invoking the UAPA, passed by ACS-Home, were defective. "Sanction 197 was not required. Hence, UAPA cannot be invoked," he said. **P10**

Accused (from top) Pragya Singh Thakur, Lt Col Prasad Purohit, Major (retd) Ramesh Upadhyay, Sameer Kulkarni and Ajay Rahirkar

BIKE DATA

Lahoti said chassis tampering of the bike used in the blast could not be established. Since forensic experts failed to fully recover its serial number, it could not be traced back to Pragya Thakur

EXPRESS READ

Drunk man kills mother with axe, sets body afire

Chikkamagaluru: A 26-year-old inebriated man hacked his mother with an axe, burnt her body and thrashed his father with a leather belt after they refused to give him money for alcohol. The incident happened at a Chikkamagaluru village on Wednesday | **P3**

13-year-old boy kidnapped, murdered

Bengaluru: A 13-year-old boy was kidnapped and murdered in Anekal police station limits. After killing the boy, the miscreants poured petrol on the body and set it on fire. The charred body was found around 4.15pm on Thursday. The accused had called the boy's father and demanded a ransom of Rs 5 lakh | **P3**

DHARMASTHALA BURIAL CASE

SIT FINDS HUMAN REMAINS AT 6TH SITE

DIVYA CUTINHO @ Mangaluru

IN a major breakthrough in the Dharmasthala mass burial case, the Special Investigation Team (SIT) on Thursday found partial human remains, including a few bones and broken skull pieces, during exhumation at the alleged burial site No 6, identified by the whistleblower.

"We found partial skeletal remains in spot 6, out of 13 sites marked by us. It is probably of a male body," sources in the SIT told *The New Indian Express*. Officials said no skull was found but a few broken skull pieces and bones were recovered, and will be sent for forensic examination.

The human remains recovered were seized by forensic experts and scene-of-crime-officers after collecting details of the location and nature of the remains when found. Puttur Assistant Commissioner Stella Varghese was present during the seizure.

Forensic experts and scene-of-crime-officers shift the partial skeletal remains recovered from an alleged burial site in Dharmasthala on Thursday | EXPRESS

The SIT, under investigating officer Jitendra Kumar Dayama, resumed Day 3 of the exhumation with manual digging at site 6, located in a forested area close to the Netravathi river, in the presence of the witness-complainant on Thursday morning. On digging the spot about 4ft deep, within an hour or so, some bones were found and upon further digging, broken pieces of a skull were also recovered.

Meanwhile, police personnel had to disperse a large curious crowd gathered at the bridge across the Netravathi river, due to traffic congestion on the stretch. Digging at five sites in the past two days had not yielded any results. Meanwhile, sources in the SIT said ground-penetrating radar (GPR) or mountain radar systems are under consideration to assist exhumation, though wet soil and interference from rain can degrade signal accuracy. **P4**

'Voter fraud': Cong to protest on Aug 5

Bengaluru: Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Thursday said Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, has credible evidence of voter fraud during the 2024 Lok Sabha elections and will lead a protest in Bengaluru on August 5 | **P4**

WITH THIS ISSUE
CITY'S BEST WEEKEND GUIDE INDULGE
40 PAGES, INCLUDING 24 OF INDULGE (TABLOID)

Labour department seeks report on planned layoffs from TCS

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Bengaluru

THE state government has sought details from Tata Consultancy Service (TCS), one of India's biggest IT service providers, that is planning to lay off over 12,000 staff worldwide. Speaking to reporters on Thursday, Labour Minister **Santosh Lad** said they have learnt about TCS planning to remove its employees. "As per law, any company which is planning to remove its employees from work has to inform the labour department. But there is no intimation from them to us. Therefore, we have sought the details," he said.

On July 27, TCS announced they would release 2 per cent of its global workforce which comes over 12,000 employees. Following this, Karnataka State IT/ITeS Employees Union had written to the state labour department pointing out that according to the Industrial Disputes Act, companies employing more than 100 workers are required to obtain prior approval from the government before carrying out any layoffs or retrenchments. "Such retrenchments are permitted only for specific reasons and under conditions clearly defined in the Act," it stated, adding that TCS violated this act.

On the state government's proposal to increase minimum working hours to 10, Lad said they had discussed it with various labour organisations. "Our officials will discuss with the companies and if they agree, this rule will be approved," he said, adding that the issue will be discussed in the Cabinet.

₹1,000CR

K'TAKA UNVEILS QUANTUM MISSION

The mission aims to accelerate research, infra and startup growth in quantum technology. A major highlight is Quantum City — an integrated hub to be established near Bengaluru | **P2**